

**Bill Gates'** foundation is spending millions to influence how \$5 billion in grants will be spent.



# Bill Gates gets say in America's education

## OBAMA ON HIS SIDE WITH REFORM POLICIES

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Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The real secretary of education, the joke goes, is Bill Gates.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has been the biggest player by far in the school-reform movement, spending about \$200 million a year on grants to elementary and secondary education.

Now the foundation is taking unprecedented steps to influence education policy, spending millions to influence how the federal government distributes \$5 billion in grants to overhaul public schools.

The federal dollars are unprecedented, too.

President Barack Obama persuaded Congress to give him the money as part of the economic stimulus so he could try new ideas to fix an education system most agree is failing. The foundation is offering \$250,000 apiece to help states apply, so long as they agree with the foundation's approach.

Obama and the Gates Foundation share some goals not everyone embraces: paying teachers based on student test scores, among other measures of achievement; charter schools that operate independently of local school boards; and a set of common academic standards adopted by every state.

The big teachers' unions dispute some of the goals shared by Obama and the foundation. They say student achievement is much more than a score on a standardized test, and it's a mistake to rely so heavily on charter schools.

"Despite growing evidence to the contrary, it appears the administration has decided that charter schools are the only answer to what ails America's public schools," the National Education Association, the largest teachers' union, said in comments about the grant competition submitted to the Education Department.

The NEA added: "We should not continue the unhealthy focus on standardized tests as the primary evidence of student success."

The American Federation of Teachers submitted similar comments. Together the unions have 4.6 million members.

Education Secretary Arne Duncan welcomes the foundation's involvement.

"The more all of us are in the game of reform, the more all of us are pushing for dramatic improvement, the better," Duncan said.